



**First Thought
Independent School**

FIRST THOUGHT CARE SERVICES

Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Policy

2026-2027

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Policy Statement

At First Thought Independent School, we recognise that many of our pupils have experienced challenges in previous educational settings. We aim to provide a nurturing environment that supports engagement and success. Exclusion is used only as a last resort, and we work closely with parents/carers and referring local authorities to ensure all reasonable steps are taken to prevent it.

This policy sets out the principles, procedures, and responsibilities relating to suspensions and permanent exclusions at First Thought Independent School. The school is an independent primary provision that accepts placements by referral from local authorities for pupils requiring specialist support. Although the statutory framework for suspensions and permanent exclusions does not apply to independent schools, the school chooses to align with it wherever practicable to ensure fairness, transparency, and consistency.

1. Aims

The aims of this policy are to:

- Ensure decisions about suspension or exclusion are lawful, reasonable, and proportionate.
- Maintain a safe, respectful, and nurturing environment for all pupils and staff.
- Promote consistency in how suspensions and exclusions are managed.
- Support pupils' continued access to education.
- Work collaboratively with parents/carers and referring local authorities to support positive outcomes.

2. Legal and Regulatory Context

This policy draws on principles from the Department for Education's guidance: 'Suspension and Permanent Exclusion from Maintained Schools, Academies and Pupil Referral Units in England, including pupil movement' (2023). While the statutory duties set out in that guidance do not apply to independent schools, First Thought Independent School voluntarily follows similar procedures as good practice. The policy also takes account of:

- The Independent School Standards Regulations 2014
- The Equality Act 2010
- The school's safeguarding and SEND duties
- The school's Behaviour Policy and Anti-Bullying Policy

3. Definitions

- Suspension is the temporary removal of a pupil from school for disciplinary reasons, for a defined period.
- Permanent exclusion is when the pupil is removed from the school roll following serious or persistent breaches of the Behaviour Policy. Separately, where a review determines that the school can no longer meet a pupil's needs safely or appropriately despite reasonable adjustments and partnership working the school will work with the referring local authority and parents/carers to agree a planned move to a more suitable provision. Such a move is not treated as a disciplinary exclusion.
- Parent/carer is any individual with parental responsibility or day-to-day care of the child.
- Referring Local Authority is the local authority that placed or funds the pupil at the school.

4. Reasons for Suspension or Permanent Exclusion

Although not exhaustive, reasons for suspension or permanent exclusion may include:

- Serious or repeated breaches of the Behaviour Policy
- Physical violence, intimidation, or bullying (including online)
- Possession or use of prohibited substances or weapons
- Vandalism, theft, or deliberate damage to property
- Serious misconduct that affects the welfare of others or the reputation of the school
- Persistent behaviour that undermines the school's ethos or safety of the community

The following very serious offences are likely to lead to permanent exclusion:

- Sexual abuse or assault.
- Serious actual or threatened violence (including bullying) against another pupil or member of staff.
- Involvement in the possession, use or supply of drugs or substances.
- Repeated serious offences such as those outlined under “Reasons for Exclusion” may also lead to permanent exclusion.

5. Decision-Making Process

Only the Head of School may decide to suspend or permanently exclude a pupil. This decision will be taken only after considering all relevant information and alternatives. Permanent exclusion will only be used as a last resort and will usually follow a pattern of persistent or serious behaviour breaches.

Before making any decision, the Head of School will:

- Investigate the incident fully and gather evidence from staff and witnesses.
- Consider whether the pupil’s behaviour was influenced by unmet needs or safeguarding concerns.
- Give the pupil an opportunity to present their version of events.
- Consider any special educational needs or disabilities. Before any decision to exclude, the school will review the pupil’s support plan and work with the local authority to explore all reasonable adjustments or interventions that might prevent exclusion. Where possible, FTIS will convene a multi-agency review to identify strategies or additional provision.

6. Notification and Recording

If the Head of Education decides to suspend a pupil, they will:

- Ensure sufficient evidence supports the decision.
- Inform parents/carers by telephone and confirm in writing the reason and duration.
- Notify the referring local authority and, if relevant, the pupil’s social worker or Virtual School Head on the same day.
- Arrange for appropriate work to be provided and marked during the period of suspension.
- Hold a reintegration meeting before the pupil’s return, involving the parent/carer and local authority representative if appropriate.

A decision to permanently exclude will be taken only:

- In response to a serious or persistent breach of the Behaviour Policy, and
- Where allowing the pupil to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of others.

Permanent exclusion at FTIS will involve notifying the referring local authority immediately so that an assessment and new placement can be arranged. The school will provide work for up to five school days following exclusion, after which the local authority becomes responsible for continuing education.

7. Review and Reconsideration

Parents/carers have the right to request a review of the Head of School’s decision by the Proprietor. The Proprietor (or a delegated panel) will consider the evidence, representations, and relevant context within 15 school days of the request. The review may decide to:

- Uphold the decision
- Reinstate the pupil
- Request further information or recommend alternative action

Where the pupil has been permanently excluded, the Proprietor may, at their discretion, convene an independent

review panel including at least one external educational professional to ensure impartiality.

8. Safeguarding and Local Authority Liaison

Safeguarding remains paramount in all decisions. The school will immediately inform the local authority and, where appropriate, the pupil's social worker or Virtual School Head if a suspension or exclusion is being considered. The school will work collaboratively to identify support and avoid repeated exclusions.

9. Reintegration after Suspension

A reintegration meeting will take place before or immediately after the pupil's return to school. This meeting will include the pupil, parents/carers, and a senior staff member, and may include the local authority if the pupil was placed by them. The meeting will:

- Acknowledge the incident and reflect on learning points.
- Reinforce the pupil's sense of belonging and readiness to return.
- Reaffirm the pupil's value as a member of the school community.
- Review support strategies to reduce recurrence.
- Update the pupil's support plan and, where relevant, involve external agencies.

10. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Head of School will maintain accurate records of all suspensions and exclusions. Data will be reviewed termly by the Proprietor to monitor patterns by gender, age, SEND, ethnicity, and referring authority. Findings will inform ongoing school improvement and equality monitoring.

11. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Head of School and Proprietor, or sooner if required by changes in guidance or school practice.

Linked Policies

- Behaviour Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- SEND Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy

